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H. KEELING . . . . . EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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By REV. J. B. JETER, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.

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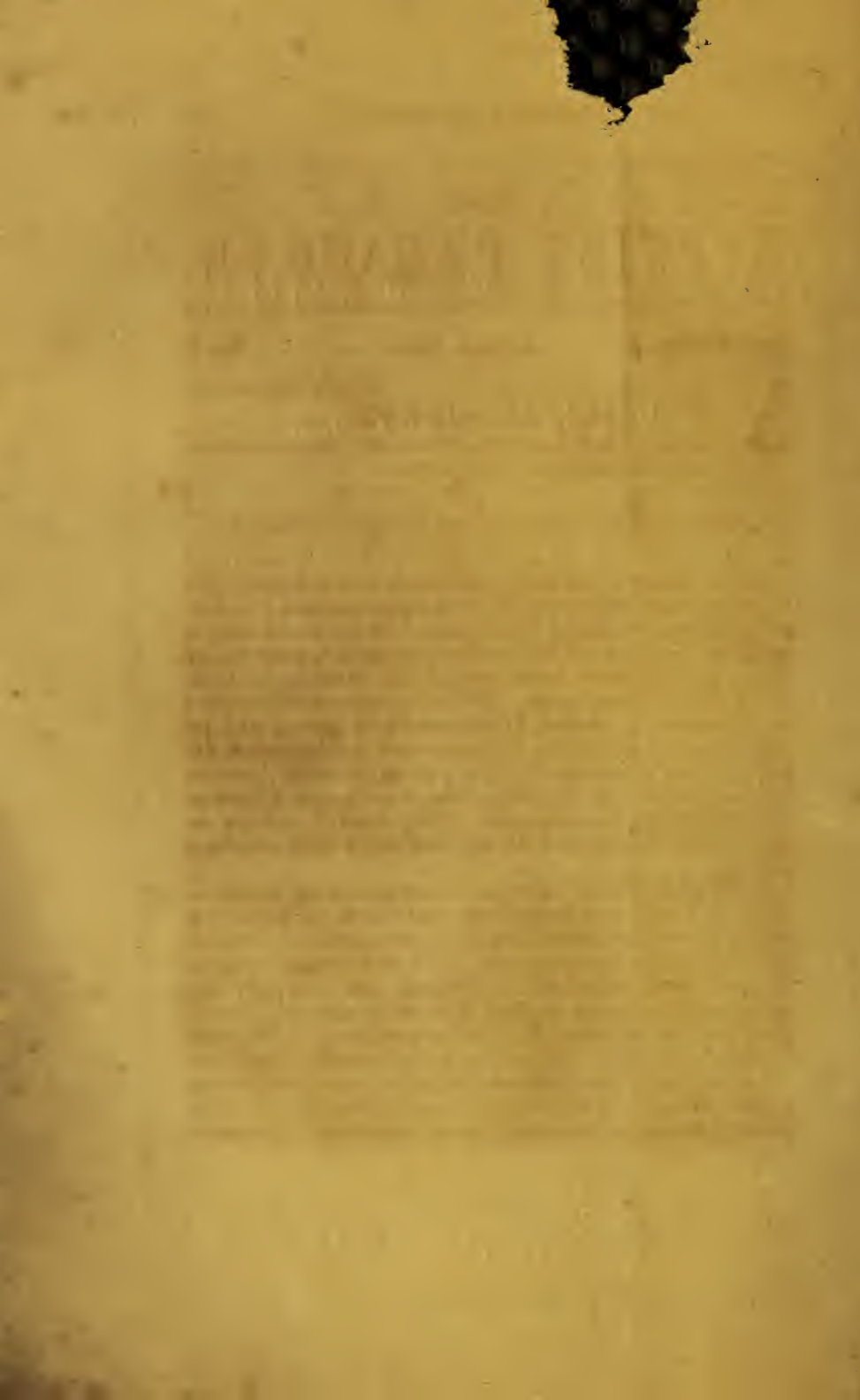
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# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## FASHIONABLE AMUSEMENTS:

A Sermon by REV. J. B. JETER, D. D., St. Louis, Mo., preached to his own people on Lord's day, in the Autumn of 1850.

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*"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."*—1 Tim., v: 6.

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As the season of frivolity, amusements and dissipation has commenced—a season fraught with embarrassment and danger to many professing Christians—I deem it my duty to raise my warning voice against the seductions to pleasure, by which so many have been, and are still likely to be, fascinated, deceived and ruined. While some run to the extreme of *asceticism*, presenting Christianity in a gloomy and repulsive aspect, and others to the extreme of *libertinism*, exhibiting religion without purity or power, our safety, brethren and hearers, lies in following, with fidelity and diligence, the teachings of the scriptures. "Thy word," said the inspired bard, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

It is not my design to enter on an exegesis of the context—that task I leave to commentators and critics—it is sufficient for my purpose to observe that the apostle cautions Timothy against pleasure loving widows: "*She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*" Though this language was spoken particularly of widows, it is clearly applicable to all, of both sexes, and of every condition, who are inordinately devoted to pleasure. There is no conceivable reason that the love and pursuit of pleasure should be more injurious to widows than to any other class of human beings. *A life of pleasure and its consequence form the subject of our discourse.*

I. *A life of pleasure*—This is the first topic demanding our consideration. What is it to *live in pleasure*? The fearful termination of such a life should lead us to examine this question, on our knees, with intense interest, and unwinking candor. To the inquiry, I reply,

*First—It is not a temperate indulgence in innocent amusements.* We are placed in a world which God has bountifully furnished for our enjoyment. Our appetites are gratified with the deliciousness and variety of the food and drink spontaneously afforded us, or which we may easily obtain by industry, skill and care; our ears are charmed by the sweet sounds of melody and concord; our eyes are delighted with the endless variety of beauty and grandeur which fills earth and heaven; and, in addition to all these pleasures, our social relations, our pursuit of knowledge, and our various avocations, open to us innumerable sources of enjoyment. Now, piety surely is not incompatible with a grateful and joyous participation of the multiplied blessings with which a beneficent Providence surrounds us. It is superstition, not piety, which has driven men from society, to seek in solitude and inactivity, and by self inflicted and painful austerities, a fervor of devotion, and a perfection of character, unattainable amid the ordinary duties and enjoyments of life. Religion is designed to make us better members of society, and not to separate us from its duties and pleasures, and make us worthless drones in the great human hive. Austerity is not holiness—penance is not repentance—an emaciated and rag covered body may conceal a heart proud, bigoted and revengeful. God does not interdict, but require the temperate, grateful enjoyment of his bounties. “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor.” The wise man refers in this passage to earthly good: to teach otherwise is contrary to the whole tenor of revelation, and the solemn injunction of Christ, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” That some indulgences are allowable, all, except the most confirmed religious dyspeptics, will agree; but to draw a line of demarcation between innocent and guilty pleasures is no easy task. There is, in many amusements, such a gradual shading from right to wrong, that the most profound casuists find it difficult to determine where right ends and wrong begins. We may easily and



certainly decide concerning one extreme that it is right, and concerning the other that it is wrong ; but between these often lies a disputed territory, in which conscience and inclination may maintain fierce, painful and uncertain conflicts. Now, it is in regard to this very territory that we feel the need of an umpire to end the strife, free conscience from the encroachments of lust and passion, and secure to man the harmless enjoyment of divine blessings.

Some principles, brethren and hearers, I will endeavor to lay down to guide you in the selection of innocent amusements. "I speak as unto wise men : judge ye what I say."

1. Pleasures, to be innocent, must be such as are not *interdicted* in the scriptures. Sin has its pleasures. To deny it were to contradict the experience of every sinner. Intemperance has its gratification of the appetite, its exhilaration of the spirits, its conviviality and its revelry. Debauchery has its gross and momentary pleasures. Revenge, to a proud, selfish and malignant heart, is sweet. Even profanity, the most unprovoked and barren of all sins, yields to impious minds the delight of conscious freedom from all religious restraints. But I need not farther particularize—every sin is committed with the promise and expectation of present or prospective enjoyment. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But all the pleasures of sin are forbidden, guilty and ruinous ; and those who enjoy them do so with their eyes open, in defiance of God, and at the peril of their souls.

2. Innocent pleasures are such as are not *injurious to health*. Health is the most valuable of earthly blessings ; and on its enjoyment depends the fulfillment of most of our obligations, as well as our usefulness in this life. Its preservation is, therefore, an imperative and sacred duty, not, indeed, specially commanded, but clearly implied in every precept of revelation. For if we are bound to employ our powers for the good of our fellow-men, and the glory of God, we are equally bound to preserve these powers, so far as it may be done by temperance and discretion, in their full vigor and activity. To serve God with bodily and mental powers, wantonly wicked and enfeebled by a devotion to pleasure, is to offer the blind, the lame and the sick in sacrifice. Amusements, then, which imperil health are not innocent. Pleasure parties, which assemble at a late hour, extend through

the greater part of the night, and involve the loss of sleep, exposures from heated rooms to unwholesome night air, and the derangement of the steady and invigorating habits of life, are fraught with danger to health. A vigorous constitution, and counteracting sanatory means, may for a season conceal the ravages of frequent attendance at such parties, but the laws of health cannot be violated with impunity. Soon the pallid cheek, the shattered nervous system, and the fastidious appetite, will tell the tale of neglect and excess. To social intercourse I have no objection, if it be regulated by courtesy, kindness and purity. Nay, I deem it an evil in Western, and indeed, in American society, that amid the din of business, and the whirl of exciting public amusements, free, kind and joyous social intercourse is too much neglected. The glare of large and expensive parties, and the excitement of public exhibitions, are substituted for the purer and nobler pleasures of the intellect and the heart. I must then enter my solemn protest against late and long continued night assemblages. They are a war, not only on health, but on the well ordered habits of society, and the dictates of common sense, to omit all reference to the demands of piety. If an inspired apostle would not class these nocturnal amusements among the "works of the flesh," I am at a loss to conceive in what category he would place them.

3. Pleasures, to be innocent, must not be attended with *dangerous temptation to sin*. The Saviour has taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." This prayer clearly implies our obligation to avoid all needless exposure to temptation. Every occupation, enjoyment and relation of life has its peculiar incitements to evil; and, these, so far as they are inevitable, in the station to which Providence has assigned us, must be met, resisted and vanquished, by the grace of God; but it is at our peril if we expose ourselves wantonly to strong and dangerous temptations. No man who voluntarily, and with his eyes open, embarks in amusements, fraught with peculiar temptations to vice, can pray, without mocking his Maker, "Lead me not into temptation." He courts temptation, has no desire to be delivered from it, and his prayer is hypocrisy. On this principle, card-playing, and visiting drinking houses, theatres and circuses should be carefully avoided. These things may not be in themselves, and of necessity evil; but they are accompanied by perilous

seductions to sin, and fraught with fearful mischief to society. Playing cards for recreation seems to be harmless ; but, in many instances, it begets and nourishes a fondness for gaming, which ends in dissipation, infamy and ruin. Drinking houses are hot beds of drunkenness and vice. The young man, who visits them of choice, should understand that he has entered on the high-road to destruction ; and that, if grace, or some interposition of Providence, prevent not, he is destined to fill a drunkard's grave. If forced there on business, he should transact it speedily, and make his escape as from a lazaretto, infected with the plague. Against dramatic exhibitions, as such, I have nothing to say ; but theatres, as they are almost universally conducted, are schools of vice. Many of the popular plays are corrupt and corrupting—the actors, with few exceptions, are, by common consent, placed beyond the pale of refined and virtuous society—drinking houses, gambling establishments, and brothels, spring up spontaneously around theatres, as in a congenial soil—and thousands of youth are trained in our populous cities, by attending them, for a career of crime and mischief. Of the circus, I need only say, that it is an amusement provided for those who do not like the intellectual seasoning of theatrical entertainments, or are too poor to pay for its enjoyment. Not only should Christians, but all men friendly to sound morality, not to say religion, abstain from these indulgences and amusements, and place themselves in direct and open hostility to them.

4. Innocent pleasures are such as do not *interfere with the duties of life*. "To every thing," says Solomon, "there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." In heaven's order, duties are before pleasures. Amusements harmless and commendable in themselves, are sinful, when followed to the neglect of duties. Pleasures, enjoyed in violation of parental authority, are evil. "Honor thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Let the child assuredly know that if he participates in any pleasure, forbidden by parental authority, though that prohibition may have originated in perverted views, or in mere caprice, he offends God, and forfeits the promised blessing. Amusements secured by expenditures which should be appropriated to the payment of debts



are condemned not only of God, but by all honest men. Pleasures, proper in themselves, are surely interdicted to those who must enjoy them at the reluctant expense of their defrauded creditors. Amusements enjoyed in seasons due to labor, or nursing the sick, or works of charity, are enjoyed at the expense of duty and a good conscience. The truth is, man was formed for higher and noble purposes than mere amusement. The most important interests are committed to his hands, the most weighty responsibilities are laid upon him, and he is animated in his toils by the prospect of a most glorious reward; and if to lighten his cares, and inspirit him for renewed labors and conflicts, he partakes of lawful recreations and pleasures, he acts wisely; but if pleasure usurps the place of duty, and momentary indulgences are preferred to enduring good, then Heaven's order is perverted, the end is sacrificed for the means, and that which is in itself harmless becomes a snare and a curse.

5. Pleasures which bring *reproach on the cause of Christ* are not innocent. No argument is needed to convince those who love Christ of the soundness of this principle. They have received too many invaluable favors at his hands, favors purchased with his own precious blood, to question the propriety of abstaining from every indulgence, by which His cause may be reproached, and His name blasphemed. Acting on this principle, they will avoid many things, which in themselves lawful, are deemed sinful, or of doubtful propriety, by others, or which, being misconstrued, are likely to seduce others into sin. This principle the apostle Paul inculcated in his ministry, and exemplified in his life. "Let not then your good," said he to the Roman saints, "be evil spoken of." That is, do not so use your liberty to eat meats, by some persons deemed unclean, as to bring reproach on your good profession. "Whatsoever things are—of good report—think on these things." Things approved and commended among men, are worthy of serious, careful consideration, and should, if they involve no sacrifice of principle, be adopted by Christians. "Wherefore," this was the apostle's disinterested, noble resolution, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." He ate meat, had no question of the lawfulness of doing it, under certain circumstances; but so zealous was he to secure his brother from



guilt, and his Master's name from reproach, that he would cheerfully forego the advantage of using this kind of diet, rather than a weak brother should be seduced, by his example, to defile his conscience in eating meat offered to idols. On this principle, dancing, as an amusement, is inhibited. Whether it is in itself right, Christian casuists are not agreed. It must be conceded, however, that the weight of authority in Protestant Christendom is decidedly opposed to the amusement. The wisdom, piety and influence of those Christians who advocate, bear no favorable comparison with those of the Christians who condemn, the practice. Many worldly persons, who love the amusement, deem it wholly incompatible with the sanctity and obligations of the Christian profession. No Christian who duly prizes his character, influence and usefulness, and is awake to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom and the honor of his name, will indulge in an amusement, condemned by the good, at least, of questionable propriety, frivolous, fascinating, and ensnaring, and never, so far as I know, found in connection with sincere and consistent piety.

*Secondly. It is not necessarily a life of profligacy, or gross vice.* The devotee of pleasure may be dissolute or immoral; and it must be conceded that an inordinate love of pleasures frequently leads to vice, the most odious and revolting, and finally to ruin; but it does not of necessity do so. Far from it—the man of pleasure may be of the most amiable dispositions, the most honorable principles, the most correct moral deportment, a professor of Christianity, and a member of an orthodox and spiritual church. The widows against whom Paul cautioned Timothy, in our text, were church members. Had they not been the caution would not have been pertinent to his design. In selecting widows to share in the charitable contributions of the churches, or, according to some commentators, to give instruction to the young, such as were devoted to pleasure should be rejected. In his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle says, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping,” so deeply was the good man's heart affected by their conduct, “whose god is their belly”—they were sensualists, sacrificing their time, property and health, with idolatrous devotion, to the gratification of their appetites—“who mind earthly things”—they were worldlings, giving their

supreme affections to earthly things, and seeking their supreme happiness from them. In looking, then, for the devotees of pleasure we need not confine our search to that class called the world; but often within the pale of the best instructed, and most pious and efficient churches, we may find the most perfect slaves to pleasures, restrained, indeed, by the dread of church censure, from some excesses, but as frivolous in spirit, and as eager to participate in every carnal amusement, as the most determined worldling. It is a great pity that so it should be.

*Thirdly.* It is to be supremely devoted to pleasure, or, as the apostle explains it, to be "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*" The text has, probably, particular reference to sensuality, or luxurious living; but all pleasures, however innocent and proper in themselves, if allowed to engross our affections, allure us from the path of duty, and unfit us for the worship of God, will produce the same fearful result. They live in pleasure who prefer it to "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." These are an enduring portion, worthy of their intense desire and eager pursuit; but if to these they prefer the momentary, unsubstantial, deceptive, corrupting pleasures of the world, then pleasure is the element in which they live. They live in pleasure who in its mirth and revelry, and infatuation, hear not the voice of duty, of conscience and of God. They live in pleasure who live without prayer and communion with God.

This supreme devotion to pleasure shows itself in a variety of ways. Behold it, in the love of display—in gay and fashionable attire—in costly and shining equipage—and in sumptuous and richly furnished palaces. See it in the eager and ceaseless pursuit of amusements—the constant attendance on soirees, and parties, and balls, and masquerades, and concerts, and theatres, and circuses, and shows. Mark it, in the giddy and unending whirl of dissipations—dissipations of time, of money, of thought, and of health. Contemplate it, in the luxuries, which wealth promises, art prepares and excess abuses. And, above all, brethren and hearers, behold it, with amazement and grief, in the neglect of all serious attention to the interests of the soul and eternity—the Bible unread—the sanctuary neglected—the Sabbath desecrated—the commandments of God made void—the Saviour despised and rejected of men, and the name of

God blasphemed. Multitudes worship no god but pleasure, acknowledge no authority but self, obey no law but inclination, and seek no good but amusements.

II. *The result of a life of pleasure*—this is the second general subject of our discourse—"She that liveth in pleasure is dead."

The devotee of pleasure, I hardly need say, is not *literally* dead : in this sense "she liveth." She may possess all the symptoms of life, health and vigor. Her eyes may sparkle with vivacity ; her cheeks may glow with the roseate hue of youth ; her full, free heart may send the tide of life, bounding with joy, through all her arteries, imparting vigor and activity to every member, and every muscle ; her voice may be melody and her motions grace ; and a sound constitution and uninterrupted health may promise her a long, bright and blissful life ; but *she is dead*. Her living body is the sepulchre of her dead soul. Her better, her spiritual, her immortal part is shrouded, confined and putrifying.

Not that she is *inactive* : Her powers are all eagerly and vigorously employed in the pursuit of pleasurable indulgences. The latest fashions, the last great and splendid party, the coming masquerade, the unrivalled drama, the crowd of admirers and flatterers, engross all the thoughts and affections of her heart, are the charming topics of every conversation, banish God and heaven from her mind, and quiet the murmurs of a disturbed conscience.

Not that she is *insensible*. She is quite alive to all the gay dreams of bliss, and all the schemes of securing pleasure. Most deeply does she feel the disappointment of attending the gay festival, the superior success of a rival, or the neglect of a supposed admirer. Intensely does she relish the amusements and gratifications, so ingeniously devised by art, and so copiously furnished for gain. Insensible, indeed ! Her soul is the seat of the most fervent, fierce and conflicting emotions. It is bloated with pride, goaded by ambition, stung by resentment, sickened by envy, inflamed by hatred, and consumed by *ennui*. It is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

But she is dead to *duty*. She was made an intelligent, moral agent, bearing the stamp of immortality. She was placed on earth, amid various relations, for purposes high as heaven and vast as eternity. She has a soul to save, a



heaven to secure, a God to glorify ; and for the accomplishment of these purposes, she is called to incessant watchfulness, prayer, self-denial, obedience and devotion. It is a solemn thing to die, but a more solemn thing to live. But the most imperative obligations, and the most important duties are all forgotten, or neglected, in the giddy whirl, or anxious pursuit of pleasure. The spirit of prayer is not congenial with the festivities and excitements of a ball-room. Piety, disgusted and grieved, takes her departure from the profanities, obscenities and corruptions of the theatre. Repentance can have no place in a heart, in which the love of pleasure, in its most innocent form, is predominant.

She is dead to all *true enjoyment*. Religion yields the only real happiness known on earth. To her sincere votaries she opens unfailing fountains of the purest and sweetest delights. A quiet conscience, strong confidence in God, a hope of heaven, consolation in truth, deliverance from the fear of death—these, Religion, are thy priceless gifts. These are blessings worthy of the desire and pursuit of an immortal spirit, and worthy to be the gifts of a God of love to his obedient children. But for these pure and rational delights, the devotee of pleasure has neither time nor taste. Christians are welcome to their Bibles, their Sabbaths, their hopes, their communion one with another, their joys, and their heavens, if she may but have her mirth and revelry. She aspires after no higher pleasure than that which may be obtained from the sparkling bowl, the giddy dance, and the brilliant entertainment.

She is dead to the *church*. How could she be otherwise ? If she is a member of the church at all, she is a fruitless, heartless one ; having a name to live and is dead. From the church she derives no profit. Her ministrations may be faithful and impressive, her ordinances scriptural and sanctifying, her devotions sincere and spiritual, her discipline affectionate and firm, and many, through her kindly influence, may be fitted for heaven ; but she—the slave of pleasure—derives neither instruction, comfort, nor well grounded hope, from her church connection. As she receives no profit from, so she imparts no good to, the church. Her prayers, if she prays at all, are mere mockery of God, an abomination in his sight—her example is a libel on Christianity and a reproach to the church—and her money, if not

all absorbed in display and luxurious living, is given grudgingly, or with ostentation, to the cause of Christ. Her body may be in the sanctuary, but her heart and thoughts are not there. The all-seeing God, in whose house she irreverently seats herself, sees that her mind, filled with the remembrances of past, or the anticipations of future pleasures, has no place for his word. Her pastor, deceived by her bodily presence, pleads, warns and expostulates, and finally hopes that she may be rescued from the vortex of ruin, but labors and hopes in vain.

She is dead to *heaven*. It is the metropolis of the universe—the palace of God—the abode of saints and angels—and the centre of bliss. Its society is the purest, most enlightened and most exalted—its employments are noble, without peril, and unceasing without fatigue—its delights are full, without satiety or excess—and its honors are enduring and fadeless. But all these are nought to her. She has neither title, nor meetness, nor desire for heaven. There Christ lives, reigns and distributes blessings. There angels, the first born sons of God, the nobles of the universe, adoring, wait before the throne, to fulfil his behests. There patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, with the innumerable company of the redeemed, arrayed in white, with palms in their hands, and freed from want, and pain and tears, sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. It may be, oh, thou giddy devotee of pleasure, that thy father, or mother, or sister is of that bright and favored throng; but thou hast deliberately turned away from the joys and glories of heaven, and chosen thy portion on earth. Farewell Christ, and heaven, and sainted relatives—I give up all for pleasure. My soul shudders while I think of it. Not only hast thou turned thy back on heaven, but thou seemest intent to lock its gates against thine entrance, and pursue with rapid, undeviating, thoughtless steps the flowery road to perdition.

She is dead to *God*. Though she lives, and moves, and has her being in him; derives from him all her blessings; is amenable to him for all her thoughts, words and deeds; and must soon appear at his tribunal to render an account of her life; yet He is not in all her thoughts. Her affections are utterly estranged from him. She is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. She has no knowledge of God, and no

desire to become acquainted with Him. She unites with the wicked of old, in saying unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." She is without God in the world; or, if she has any god, that god is pleasure. This is the object of her supreme affection and unceasing devotion. To this she willingly sacrifices her time, money and health; and, if grace prevent not, will certainly sacrifice her happiness, her soul, her all.

She is *dead*—morally, spiritually dead—dead in the most fearful sense of the term. She is corrupt, loathed of God, fit only to be cast out, and buried, both soul and body, in hell. What a dreadful doom! A life of effeminacy, luxury and excess, ending in a lake of fire and brimstone—

"A scene of fancied bliss and heart-felt care  
Closing, at last, in darkness and despair."

I will not dwell on this appalling subject. Need I remind you again, my dear hearers, that the doom, which I have feebly portrayed, is not restricted to widows, or females, or the young, or the rich, or the fashionable, but covers all, of every age, condition and character, and of both sexes, who prefer the pleasures of sense to the pleasures of piety; who for their happiness confide in creatures rather than the Creator. I fear some in this congregation, perhaps many, are subject to this frightful doom. These, who dance but pray not; who read fictions with an interest and diligence which they never bestow on the word of God; who attend to amusements as a business and religion as a recreation, or not at all; who are more concerned about the fashion of their garments than the dispositions of their hearts; who willingly give pounds for the gratification of their desires, but grudgingly give pence to feed the hungry, or promote the cause of Christ—tell me, my hearers, are they not living in pleasures, and dead while they are living? And surely it does not abate, one tittle of the guilt, and the danger, and the fearful consequences of a life of sin, that it is found within the precincts of a well ordered Christian church. Some sins fall under the observation, and incur the censure of the church, and subject their proprietors to discipline, and, without repentance, to exclusion from fellowship; but the inordinate love of pleasure, if restrained within certain conventional limits, finds toleration in the purest and best governed church. It is an insidious, undefinable and growing evil,



which seeks to keep on fair terms with religion, and to gain the approbation, at least, connivance of good men; but which every where, and under all circumstances, is the death of the soul, and, repentance preventing not, the precursor of eternal death.

In conclusion—

1. Let us sedulously guard against the *seductions* to a life of pleasure. Ten thousand perils beset the paths of the young and unwary. They are instinctively *fond of amusement*. This fondness is seen in every stage of life, from childhood to maturity, and frequently from maturity to old age. We may philosophize, inculcate a rigid self-denial, and maintain a strict discipline; but the young love pleasures, and pursue them by a law which neither education nor authority can repeal or evade. The guardians of children and youth should carefully provide for them innocent entertainments, and regulate their indulgence in them. But under the best instruction and discipline their fondness for amusements may become a snare to them. Unrestrained, it will hurry them into excesses, and finally into vice and ruin.

The *innocence of many amusements* is another cause of their danger. Were they sinful, they would be positively forbidden by parental authority, and scrupulously avoided; but they are in themselves harmless, and are, therefore, tolerated. But once indulged in, they may engross the affections, and banish from the mind all serious thought of religion; and insidiously pave the way to questionable indulgences, and finally to flagrant sins.

The *solicitations* of kind, but indiscreet friends is another source of temptation and danger to the young. If left to the guidance of parental affection, and the dictates of their own consciences, they would not be so readily seduced into a headlong career of pleasure; but there are never wanting those who, by their conversation, example and direct efforts, could allure them to scenes of festivity, excitement and temptation. They see no evil in these entertainments; they are fashionable; young persons should learn the ways of the world; and they generously proffer to accompany and initiate the inexperienced youth, and the proffer wins their hearts, and enflames their desire for the untasted bliss.

To these sources of temptation, we may add the blinding influence of *excitement*. How often on festival occasions

are young men hurried into excesses, by the impulse of excitement, from which they would shrink with horror, in their sober and reflecting moments. When the ardent, amiable young man is first carried home to his grieved parents in a fit of intoxication, from a fourth of July revel, he is amazed, so soon as returning reason will permit reflection, that he was so blinded and infatuated by excitement. Happy for him if he sees his danger and avoids it.

Without thoughtfulness and caution the ruin of the young, especially in cities, is inevitable. And permit me, my young friends, earnestly to recommend piety as the only safeguard from the seductions to pleasure. Possessing this, you will have pure, substantial bliss—learn to place a just estimate on earthly pleasures, and enjoy them in subservience to your duty, and your immortal interests—and, when flesh and heart shall fail, secure a participation in the “fulness of joy” in God’s presence, and the “pleasures evermore,” which are at his right hand.

2. The world reasonably expects that Christians, at least, will set an example of *self-denial and moderation*. Their profession demands this of them. They tell us, that having tried the world, and found it vain, unsatisfying and deceitful, they have renounced it. They proclaim that in Christ Jesus, they have found a peace which passeth understanding, and a joy unspeakable, and full of glory. In the most solemn, impressive and public manner, they have proposed to renounce the world, with its pomps and vanities, and to seek their happiness from a higher, purer source. The men of the world are slow to believe this profession, and are apt to look on it as mere cant, or downright hypocrisy. And if they are as eager as the most confirmed worldling to share in sensual pleasures, who can give them credit for sincerity? They are required not to exclude themselves from the world, but to perform an important part in its moral renovation—not to be monks, but to be self-denying, cross-bearing Christians. They should use the world as not abusing it. They may with glad and grateful hearts partake of the innocent recreations and pleasures of life; but they should seek, and evince that they seek, their chief enjoyment from God. Consistency, the salvation of sinners, and the honor of Christ, demand these things of them. The men of the world carefully watch them, to see whether their professions and their

deportment are in harmony ; and rejoice in their failures and inconsistencies. "Behold," say they, "how proud, and fashionable, and devoted to pleasure these Christians are—the most unsanctified do not outstrip them in the career of worldliness." A pity it is, my brethren, that so many professing Christians should, by the levity of their spirit, their worldly conformity, and their carnal amusements, provoke the sneer and the taunt of infidelity. Such Christians are, I fear, not only dead in themselves, but a reproach and incubus to the cause of Christ, and a blight and curse to the world in which they live. And if, on the other hand, those who bear the name of Christ will but deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him daily, their bitterest and most unscrupulous enemies will be constrained to acknowledge their sincerity and applaud their consistency.

3. If any are resolved to pursue a life of pleasure, let them prepare to *meet the consequences*. Two roads are set before you : One is the narrow and unfrequented road of self-denial, watchfulness, prayer and obedience—the other, the broad and crowded road of pleasure, folly and wickedness. Which road, my dear friends, will you pursue ? In the narrow way, you must have conflicts, and toils and sorrows ; but, to encourage you in this pilgrimage, you have the examples of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the noble army of martyrs ; the promise of divine succors and consolations ; and the prospects, more, the assurance, of an immortality of blessedness and glory. In the broad way you may have amusements, and pleasures, and laughter ; and in your career you will be cheered by the example and countenance of the gay, the worldly, and the ungodly. But whither does this road lead ? Conscience and revelation furnish no equivocal answer to this inquiry. If there is any heaven, it cannot be for those who have no serious concern about it, and make no preparation to enjoy it. Even infidelity must admit, that if there is a heaven, it is reserved for the serious, the devout, the obedient. If there is any hell, a life of frivolity, pleasure and dissipation must conduct to it. And now, my dear hearers, if deaf to the voice of Christian friendship, conscience and revelation, you are resolved to pursue this road, nerve yourselves to endure the consequences of your folly and guilt. Your abode will be the world of perdition ; your companions the depraved, guilty and wretched—



lost men and lost spirits ; your portion will be the unmixed wrath of God ; your employment will be blaspheming God and the Lamb ; your music will be the wailings of despair ; and your bed a lake of quenchless fire and brimstone. I know that now in the days of your prosperity, and health, and merriment, you harden your hearts, and make light of these things ; but "can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with you?" You are terrified at the approach of danger—you are disconcerted and troubled by the slightest pain—you writhe, and groan, and roar at the extraction of a tooth, or the amputation of a limb—how then can you dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings? My hearers, you cannot endure the consequences of a life of sinful pleasures—they are intolerable. If you are not infatuated, insane, you will avoid these fearful consequences by a sincere and timely repentance, by an unfeigned submission to the authority of Messiah, and by a life of watchfulness, mortification and prayer. May God of his infinite mercy preserve you from the fascinations of the world, the power of your corrupt lusts, and, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, prepare you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, I humbly beg for Jesus' sake. Amen !

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#### FASHIONABLE AMUSEMENTS.

In submitting to our readers the foregoing carefully prepared sermon by Dr. Jeter, furnished at our special request, we seize the remaining pages of this No. for a continuance of suggestions commenced in our February number. We then glanced at the importance and difficulty of the subject ; but now turn to the subject itself, upon which, however, we cannot be expected to do more than merely offer a few suggestions.

The love of alternate repose and excitement appears to be natural to man, if not to creation in general. It is perhaps in amazing condescension to this law that inspiration represents Deity Himself as having '*rested*,' after his six day's work, the world. The same idea is versified by an American bard, when he sings,

"An angel's wing would droop if long at rest ;  
And God Himself, inactive, were no longer blest,"

That man in his present state of being is constantly influenced by this law appears certain.

As regards our animal nature, its existence is commenced and continued by stimuli. Of these, too much or too little is disease, and, beyond a certain point, death. Inasmuch as every acquisition and every act of mind is the product of motive, which is itself the effect of excitement, intellect follows the same general law ; and this is the foundation upon which rests the whole superstructure of morals. The principle is equally true of the volitions of an infant, and the serenest contemplations of the greatest philosopher, of the sinner in all his transgressions and of the believer in all his devotions.

The direction taken by this love of alternate excitement and repose, varies with indefinitely varying circumstances. The sleep of midnight is rest to the wearied laborer, and to the supine Asiatic inactivity is the consummation of bliss. One man seeks excitement in the busy scenes of merchandize by day, and the prattle of his children by night ; another, on the sterm billows of ocean, or on the battle-field, amidst the clash of swords and the roar of cannon. The ball and the novel may be to the young lady what martial ambition was to Napoleon, or the Northwest passage to John Franklin.

Amusement may be merely one of the forms assumed by this natural love of excitement. If this is true, there are only three ways in which it can be wrong : One, *in itself* ; another, when *carried to excess* ; and the third, when *necessarily associated with something* that is itself wrong.

That *all* amusement is *in itself* wrong will not be affirmed. Had it been so, it is not probable that we should have been formed so capable of it, nor that nature herself would have so abounded with the sources of its gratification. Just at this point we take issue with the worldling. Every kind and degree of gratification not taught or authorized in the Bible he *claims* for the world. But upon what authority does he claim it? We claim all that is not *forbidden*, and we defend this claim. Who gave eloquence, taste, genius, wealth, refinement, friendship, painting, drawing, sculpture, love, poetry, instrumental and vocal music, (the very word itself of the same family with amusement,)—who gave all these to the world? They are legitimately *ours*. A man's religion does not depend upon possessions, attainments, or

refinement, or the absence of these, but religion itself is not pauperism, nor ignorance, nor vulgarity. She is equally independent of all these and of their opposites. Tell us not of learning as a hand-maid of religion. She has none and needs none. In herself she combines all excellence, or produces it. And, lest we forget it when we come to the right place for it, we here say, that she has been infinitely degraded in the popular mind by the juxtapositions into which she has sometimes been thrown by friends, real and professed. "Such a young lady is very pious, she never goes to parties now." This may be very true, and yet she may be as far from religion as ever. The man who is pining over his poverty, little thinks that this is quite as decisive evidence of love for the world as if he were swallowed up in its wealth and fashion.

But let us not wander. What we wish is to see some masterly pen, such as Dr. Dagg's, or Dr. Fuller's, or Dr. Manly's, or Dr. Jeter's, or Dr. Howell's, apply these tests, or better, if there are any better, to the various popular amusements of this age, especially of this country.

We will suppose, for the purpose of illustration and argument, that it is true of most of these amusements that they are not *in themselves* wrong—a point which we do not, however, concede, except by supposition—even then, if it can be shown that they are almost invariably *carried to excess*, or *necessarily associated with something else* that is wrong, they must come under the ban not only for professors of religion, but for all whom they control.

#### GAMES OF HAZARD.

Will not the second and third tests exclude all games of hazard, even when played for recreation? In one particular there is a striking analogy between professional gaming and intemperance. Playing for amusement bears the same relation to professional gambling that alcohol as a beverage bears to alcohol in drunkenness. Perhaps no man ever commenced the use of cards with the intention of becoming a professed gambler; but if none were to play, the profession must die. The same is true of intemperance. Dr. Rush, whom none will suspect of fanaticism, held it almost impossible for any man to be for many years accustomed to the beverage, without falling into the habit of inebriation. The



argument is, that in proportion as the stimulant is continued to be used, its sensible effect is diminished, whereas the older the patient becomes, the less able is he to bear the excitement. Finally, when he is most debilitated, most needs it, and needs most of it, he is least able to bear the least, and therefore falls. It was precisely on this principle that the temperance reformation was commenced. Although, therefore, there may be no more harm in a game of dominoes than a julep, and of itself none in either, yet, if excess or association with something unquestionably wrong is almost universal, or sooner or later scarcely avoidable, both are cut off by these tests. Nothing seems more perfectly harmless than for a party of young ladies and gentlemen to spend an hour or a winter's evening at cards ; but from youthful experience fifty years ago, when every body played and drank, we know the fascination of cards and the danger of alcohol. Although brought up in lower county Southern habits, in our own native Virginia, we were never in our whole life intoxicated, nor at a theatre, nor a circus, nor a race, nor a gaming-house, nor a ball, nor any where else where we ought not to be. And yet it is a miracle that we were not a gambler, or a drunkard, or both. Many of our youthful companions, inferior to none in this Old Dominion, fell victims to intemperance, the *pari passu* companion of games of hazard for amusement. We neither claim for ourselves the credit, nor offer ourselves as a model. Better persons than we might have done what we avoided ; but our motive in early life was the fact that we thought it a reflection on religious parents that their children do such things, and at maturity we professed religion, since which time we have had higher sources of gratification.

## DANCING.

One of the hardest debates we recollect to have had in our whole life, was with an intelligent and lovely young lady on the subject of dancing. Having surrendered reluctantly, after a noble defence, every other position, she remained firm in this : "But I love dancing, and should die without it." This young lady labored under a metaphysical mistake. Her overflowing abundance and untiring elasticity of spirits loved to vent themselves in something, and that was the channel to which they had been directed. She loved bright

eyes, and smiling faces, and sweet voices, and bounding steps, and warm hearts in sympathy with her own—and all these she found in dancing. It was not, therefore, dancing, but its concomitants, that she loved, and these might all have been found in other associations than this.

#### THE THEATRE AND CIRCUS.

On some great occasion, the performance and actors being in repute, the elite go to the theatre, but the general attendance is by the profligate and prodigal, and those least able to bear the expense. That it might be reformed is no argument in its favor, if it *is* not and *never has been*. If the theatre is really what its friends maintain, not a school of vice, but morals, why those guards, and various grades of bar-rooms for the genteel and the vulgar? and casts of seats for the virtuous and the vile? And why does authority so high as that of Walter Scott assert, that in every age it has been patronized and supported mainly by the depraved and base?

#### RACES.

If a running match of horses is *in itself* as innocent as a walking match, yet if it has about it paraphernalia of wickedness, such as betting and carousing, it falls under the second test.

#### CONCERTS.

It seems to us, that were there no other objection to concerts than the prodigious expense and the destruction of domesticity, these are enough to condemn them. On the score of expense, we should like to see an investigation of the statistics of these amusements. When the evils of intemperance began to be exposed, Christendom was amazed at such facts as this, that in Massachusetts (in the land of steady habits) alcohol cost as much as education and religion combined. But it was so; and we should not be surprised if it is equally true of the statistics of amusements in this whole country. The domestic institution is confessedly the oldest on earth, States and churches yielding to it. In the religion of the Hebrews it held a conspicuous place, and in Christianity it has not descended. But our fashionable amusements annihilate all this. How can a wife or mother fulfil her duties, out till midnight night after night, leaving her little charges to the care of ignorant slaves, or more igno-

rant and less interested mercenaries or helps? No wonder at the deterioration of human vigor by civilization, when it brings in its train such refining destructives! No mortal can conceive of the domestic mischiefs of this whole round of fashionable amusements in cities, without being where a mother, or wife, or son, or daughter is absent.

Nominally, education is in the ascendant, but whether really so is debatable. Parents wish their children to enjoy the reputation of being educated, but it must be without the labor of acquiring it. Hence there are but two educated classes among us, the one those who have commenced their course after having reached maturity, the other those who have from infancy been taught by learned, skilful, faithful parents. The reason is, that the whole process of every system yields to amusement. So it is of every thing else, and threatens to be even in religion.

We know it will be considered a sufficient answer to all this to assert that we are a misanthrope or an ascetic, and wish to destroy or abridge the gayety and joyousness of the happy and especially of the young. This we might resent as an aspersion of which we stand vindicated by tens of thousands of personal acquaintances and friends, especially among the young and the gay; but we content ourselves by asking our opponent one single question: Is this your whole sum of human happiness? Cut off from what are called fashionable amusements, would your happiness vanish? Then we sincerely pity you, not only as a moral and an immortal, but an intellectual and social being. Where is the boundless laboratory of the wonderful, and beautiful, and curious in nature, above us, below us, within us, all around us? We firmly believe that it is the absence of intelligence and refinement that drives the old and the young from the parlor, the soiree, the library, the promenade, the saunter over hill and dale, the equestrian jaunt, and the thousands of diversions open to cultivated intellects, to look for pleasure in sources of which the danger is certain, or the safety doubtful.

In this hasty glance we have intentionally overlooked religion, because we take it for granted that to the believer all earthly joys are dreams compared with her's. Literature, eloquence, romance, poetry, music, friendship, whatever cultivates and ennobles man, physically, mentally, mor-



ally, all, when they take counsel of her and pay her tribute, find in her their noblest patron and their warmest friend; but, when her rivals, dwindle into insignificance. Compared with her, all else appears as dross to gold, as mud to chrystal streams, as darkness to the noontide sun. Here is of heaven itself the foretaste and the pledge. I bathe, no water cleanses me so—I eat or drink, no food so nourishes the blood or so delights the taste—I ride or walk, or read, or write, or speak, or hear, no exercise invigorates, or cheers, or so enraptures and exalts me. ED.

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#### OUTLINES OF A SERMON ON THE BENEFITS OF AFFLICTION:

By Rev. H. Keeling.

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*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*—Ps. cxix, 71.

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Good and evil, in any other sense than moral, are so, or become so, in two ways: one in themselves, the other by being overruled or perverted. Wealth or learning, in itself a blessing, perverted is a curse. Sickness and persecution, in themselves evils, may be converted into blessings by the overruling Providence and sanctifying grace of God.

The school of affliction teaches us, among others, these four lessons, viz:

1. It teaches us *sympathy*. Of the unholy dispositions our degenerate race is heir to is the want of feeling for the woes of others.

“There is no flesh in man’s obdurate heart;  
It does not feel for man.”

Though free from sin, the school of affliction might be the best in which to learn this lesson. “‘The *Captain* of our salvation’ was ‘*made perfect through suffering*,’ how much more his soldiers. As a reason why ‘we have a high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities,’ St. Paul mentions, ‘he himself also was tempted in all points like as we are, yet *without sin*.’”

Have you not experienced, brethren, that to *read* the tale of human anguish, to *hear* the cries of the distressed, to *witness* poverty and pain—that *nothing* will make you weep with them that weep, but to be yourselves *sufferers*.

In all the *corruptions*, and *weaknesses*, and *throes* of our

sinful postacy—on whatever sea, gulph or stream of this vast water, “the world,” we are dashed—whether ‘the lust of the flesh,” “the lust of the eye,” or “the pride of life,” amidst our perils and buffetings, let us remember, “the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren in the world and let us learn “to bear one another’s burdens,” and thus “fulfil the law of Christ.”

2. It teaches us *wisdom*. We learn to estimate less highly the possessions and enjoyments of a world unsatisfying in its *nature*, and transitory in its *duration*; to form more just and exalted ideas of the peace and glory of heaven; to trust less in creatures for our happiness and more in the Creator; that to *love, fear* and *obey* Him is our *interest, obligation, security*.

“Adversity” is a better teacher than “Prosperity.” As the absence of the sun reveals to our delighted gaze the silver moon walking in her brightness, and the shining hoofs of heaven marshal’d o’er the plain, so “adversity,” not “prosperity,” brings to our minds the awful, the pleasing, the imposing truths of religion. Adversity is a better teacher than Philosophy or Learning.

“If wisdom is our lesson, (and what else  
Ennobles man? what else have angels learn’d?)  
Grief! more proficients in thy school are made  
Than genius or proud learning e’er could boast.”

Dr. Young.

3. It teaches us *obedience*. Or, I should rather have said, “In the *school* of affliction we are taught *sympathy, wisdom* and *obedience*; but the *Teacher* is *God*.” However the expression conveys the idea: “Is *Christ* the better teacher or the *schools*?”

In attributing so much to sanctified affliction, (for it is of *this* that we speak; afflictions *unblessed* are, as all blessings are, abused into curses,) we mean not to deny the efficacy of *Faith*. Faith works by love, &c.; or of *Hope*: every one that hath this hope in him purifieth, &c.; or of *Love*: the love of Christ constraineth us, because, &c. But it is in *this school* that these principles and graces are implanted in the heart and made to produce fruit. And between these ideas there is perfect harmony. Let us illustrate our meaning by considering the *sufferings* of Christ in their connection with his *conformity to the will* of the Father, and

his *anticipation* of joy; and let these represent the *affliction*, the *obedience* and the *hope* of the saint. In "*suffering*" the Redeemer "learned obedience." "Although he was a son, yet learned he *obedience* by the things which he *suffered*, and became the author," &c. But this was done *in prospect* of glory. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the *joy* that was set before him *endured* the cross despising the shame," &c.

4. It teaches us *submission*. Submission to God is of *two* kinds: *voluntary* and *involuntary*—the former is a *virtue*, the latter a *penalty endured*.

*Voluntary* submission is a sweet acquiescence of the soul to the will and disposal of God, in his Providence and Grace. *Involuntary* is a prostration and overthrow proceeding from sinful rebellion.

The difference is as between the parental correction, which brings to reflection and reform the erring son, and the judicial sentence which carries the flagitious offender to the place of execution. Of the one you have an instance in the tears and restoration of Peter; of the other in the obduracy and ruin of Judas.

Alas! for the man who is proof against admonition, kindness, expostulation, threatening, conscience and AFFLICTION. If, with such teachers, in such schools, he remains incorrigible in rebellion against God, and rejection of the Messiah, his destruction is inevitable. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."—Matt. 21, 44. But blessed the man in whose disposition and character are the qualities and prospects implied in the text, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Amen.





## REMITTANCES.

☞ Where there are not current notes under \$5, remittances may be made us in gold, by enveloping the coin in a bit of paper attached to the inside of the letter by a wafer. And inasmuch as postage is cheaper than commission, it is best that all remittances be made directly to us.

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